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Editorial

POPULARIZING THE CLASSICS

The "Reports from the Classical Field" for the November number of the *Classical Journal* were of especial interest as showing the great popularity which dramatic presentation of classical material has attained. We read of "Scenes from Cicero" and "Dramatizations from Vergil;" of the *Alcestis*, the *Antigone*, *Phormio*, and *Trinummus*, and other Greek and Latin plays, in the original or in translation, presented by both high schools and colleges in every section of the land; not to mention Homeric recitals and other public and popular presentations of classical material.

Activity of this kind in a school cannot fail to have the effect of awakening a keen interest, primarily in the class or group itself which gives the play; then throughout the school, and frequently in the whole community. In a small Illinois town a year ago, all classes of people were aroused to a most lively interest in a performance of scenes from Vergil presented by the classical students of the high school; and the young lady who impersonated "Dido" was the heroine of the hour.

Such work as this, namely in promoting knowledge of ancient life and literature and in arousing a consciousness of classical values in the general public mind, is of great service to the cause of classical learning; for, in the long run, the real support of the classics, as of the laws, must rest on a favorable public opinion.

Again, the public will more generously uphold the classics when scholars are able and willing to give the classics to the public in such a way that their real values may easily and immediately be discerned. More emphasis should be laid on those things which we have in common with the ancients, as, for instance, on the intimate relation which the Greek and Latin languages sustain to the English language;

all that is best in their literatures should be made available and popular through good translations; and especially should there be popular but sound presentation of ancient life and manners. A hopeful feature of contemporary scholarship is that these sidelights on ancient life are multiplying in the literary output of our time. Such books as Dill's *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, Gulick's *Life of the Ancient Greeks*, Mahaffy's *Silver Age of the Greek World*, Fowler's *Social Life in the Age of Cicero*, and Abbott's *Society and Politics in Ancient Rome*—all these enable the modern reader to come closer to ancient life in knowledge and sympathy than ever before, to the immense increase, we should hope, of popular knowledge of, and interest in, the classics.

But, after all, the classics will not be popularized in any broad and effective sense except by the rank and file of classical teachers themselves; not until every teacher of Latin or Greek conceives of his subject as entirely worthy of his own devotion and of any man's interest, and succeeds, somehow or other, in impressing this idea upon his community; not until every classical teacher is himself well found in knowledge, resourceful and zealous in teaching, so full of life and interest that no pupil of his will ever think of Latin as a dead language or as an uninteresting subject; not until the Latin classroom has become the center of life and interest in the school, will the impression inevitably go abroad that there is "something in" this Latin, and that it is quite as much worth while as mathematics or manual training. If we are ourselves uninspiring, monotonous, and dry-as-dust, we may be sure that we are killing potential scholars every year, and filling our communities with contempt for a subject that cannot inspire even those who profess to be its chief expounders, and the classics will die in the house of their professed friends.

But the outlook is bright that teachers are awakening everywhere to their duties and opportunities. The great sectional organizations of classical teachers, covering the whole extent of our country; the various state and local organizations, whose live programmes are reported in nearly every issue of this *Journal*; the numerous clubs for more intimate and sustained study, of a typical illustration of which we read in the December number—all of these give abundant reason for believing that the classical cause is coming out at last into a large place.